

As You Translate, So Shall You Draw

DMITRY YERMOLOVICH

I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way.
Jessica Rabbit in Who Framed Roger Rabbit?

Did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?
The Dormouse in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Much of the folklore and literary fairy-tale tradition that originated to the west of Russian borders, near or far, has become part and parcel of Russia's cultural heritage. Cinderella, Puss in Boots, Little Red Riding Hood, the Ugly Duckling, the Tin Woodman, and, of course, Alice, along with most residents of Wonderland, are household characters as popular with Russian children and adults as they are with their peers abroad. However, the same fairy-tale characters do not always *look* the same in books, cartoons, and movies across countries. One striking example (if a non-Carrollian digression is permitted here) is the dress code of Little Red Riding Hood: contrary to her English name, her Russian-speaking version has never worn any riding cloak or hood, but flaunts a red beret or fancy hat instead—fashioned most often, for some obscure reason, in what the illustrators believe to be the medieval Dutch peasant style.

There are three types of reasons why characters from children's books are actually depicted differently in different cultures. Some tales and stories are spread around by hearsay and have gone through a period of inevitable adjustments in diverging or isolated environments, leading to the dissimilarities we observe today. Others were borrowed from foreign sources by writers who retold them in accordance with their own taste and that of their readers—as was the case with Sergei Aksakov, who transplanted Beauty and the Beast from an unacknowledged French source onto Russian soil in his "The Little Scarlet Flower," or Alexei Tolstoy, who gave Russian children a shorter (and, arguably, a lot better written) version of "Pinocchio" in his "The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino." The third possible reason for differences has to do with subtleties and liberties of translation, and this is what we will discuss here in the context of Russian translations of and illustrations for the *Alice* books.

TRAPPED IN TRANSLATION

Many artists are not familiar with foreign languages, and few of them (let's put it this way) can fathom all the semantic, verbal, and stylistic nuances of the original books they illustrate. No translation is an exact replica of the original (otherwise running the risk of becoming its death mask). Apart from translation mistakes, which are quite common, there is always the insurmountable factor of systemic incongruencies between languages and the need for text restructuring, not only resulting in certain losses but also causing the translator to make certain interpretative choices, necessitating modifications, omissions, additions, and replacements. Those choices are sometimes well founded and sometimes arbitrary. The results can manifest themselves graphically, the word being used in its very literal sense, in book illustrations. Without even knowing it, illustrators not infrequently find themselves trapped by translators.

One of the biggest problems for translators from English to Russian (and, I believe, into quite a few other languages) is the sex of fairy-tale characters. We are all aware of the efforts by liberation and equality movements to rid English speech of what is seen as unnecessary gender references. But English will seem an immaculate language in this regard compared to most European, and especially Slavic, languages, including Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian, in which every single noun, whether animate or inanimate, belongs to one of three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, or neuter). In addition, nouns must agree with gender-specific forms of adjectives, determiners, participles, and past-tense verbs.

In the Russian literary fairy-tale tradition, the sex of an animal character is determined by the grammatical gender of its common name. Only a few animal names in Russian have both masculine and feminine versions, as in the case of "cat" (we call a tomcat *hot*

and a she-cat *koshka*) or “goat” (*kozyol* or *koza* for “billy goat” and “nanny goat,” respectively). Most animal names have just one version, either masculine or feminine. To take one example, the Russian for “swallow” (*lastochka*) is grammatically feminine, and the only way to specify a male swallow is to use a technical descriptive phrase (a big problem for translators of Oscar Wilde’s “The Happy Prince,” incidentally, where a swallow falls in love with a reed, also a feminine noun in Russian).

For a translation (or, for that matter, any literary Russian text) to sound natural, the grammatical gender of every character’s common name must agree (as a general rule) with the character’s sex as mentioned or implied by the author. If the two happen to coincide, the translator can consider himself/herself lucky. But if not, the space for maneuvering is limited. As a possible solution, one can hunt for a correspondence among the names of similar or related species. But it is important not to get too carried away in the process, because the translator’s effort to preserve the character’s gender may sometimes do more harm to the story than a “sex change operation.” In this article, I’ll refer to seven nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian translations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, as well as my own.¹

GENDER VS. SPECIES

We all remember that the Blue Caterpillar is a male character. Seeing that it smokes a hookah, a pastime considered very “manly” in Victorian England, Alice addresses the Caterpillar as “Sir.” But the Russian word for “caterpillar”—*gusenitsa* (гусеница)—is of the feminine gender and thus implies a female. There is no corresponding masculine noun. One translator of Alice, Aleksandr Shcherbakov, replaced the Caterpillar with *Shelkopryad* (Шелкопряд), or Silkworm, which is masculine in gender, in his 1977 translation,² turning the character into a more specific insect variety. Another translator, Nina Demurova, admitted considering the same option for a while. “Tempting as the word may be,” she wrote, “I had to reject it after some deliberation, both because a silkworm is too small and also because it evokes in my imagination all kinds of Southern associations which do not agree well with the nature of the character.”³

I do not happen to associate anything “Southern” with the silkworm, but if I did, that alone would not have stopped me from using the word. My own reasoning against it is different: silkworms are never blue, so Lewis Carroll’s Blue Caterpillar can hardly be one of them. In an apparent realization of the fact, Mr. Shcherbakov changed his Caterpillar’s (i.e., Silkworm’s) color from blue to *sizyi* (сизый), which means “bluish-gray.” According to encyclopedias, silkworm larvae vary in color from dark white to yellow, so the adjective looks like a compromise between being true

to Carroll and being true to life. Mr. Shcherbakov’s illustrator, USSR Academy of Arts member Mai Miturich, was probably disoriented by the description and went his own way: he colored the “silkworm” pink for some reason, and gave it a generally unconventional appearance compared with what one can find in entomology books (see Figure 1).

Some other translators, including the writer Boris Zakhoder,⁴ went even further and opted for a simple “Worm”—*Chervyak* (Червяк). Nina Demurova wrote that she had rejected the name because it was “too rude, of course.” I do not think that the word sounds rude, but there is an added and, I believe, stronger reason why it is an unhappy choice: zoologically, worms are a totally different class of creeping invertebrates than caterpillars; they do not turn into chrysalises or butterflies, which is what Alice predicts when



Figure 1

speaking to the Caterpillar. The real problem with “Worm” is that it alters the whole logic of the story, making the girl sound absurd where she isn’t.

Although for different reasons than Nina Demurova, I used the direct equivalent of “Caterpillar”—*Gusenitsa* (Гусеница)—when translating *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. I didn’t go as far as to substitute “Madam” for “Sir,” as she did, so as not to overemphasize the insect’s sex. (After all, “Sir” is primarily a term of politeness, which can easily be expressed in Russian by other means.) Also, I believe that to give the Caterpillar a feminine-gender name is a lesser sacrifice in this instance than changing the character’s species or animal class altogether, especially because its gender does not play a major role in the story (the author invariably refers to the insect with the neuter pronoun “it” rather than “he”). At any rate, no illustrator of Carroll using my translation would have to depict anything different from the original character.

A similar problem arises with the Wasp from the “suppressed” episode of *Through the Looking-Glass*. Martin Gardner describes the character’s personality as “a waspish but somehow lovable old man”⁵: the wasp is definitely a male character, whose sex is important. That makes the direct Russian equivalent of “wasp”—*osa* (оса), a feminine noun—unusable. Nina Demurova’s solution was to transform the Wasp into a related species—*Shmel’* (Шмель), or “Bumblebee.”

From an illustrator's perspective, this is probably too drastic a change, because the bodies of a wasp and a bumblebee differ in shape considerably: bumblebees are generally short, plump, and densely furry, whereas wasps have elongated bodies with two distinct segments and a thin waist. Even non-specialists will hardly confuse one with the other, so a picture of a bumblebee would hardly do for the original book in English.

Luckily, the Russian language affords a more efficient option to deal with the issue: it is the masculine-gender word *shershen'* (шершень "hornet")—actually, a species of the wasp family. I had no doubts about using the name in my translation of *Through the Looking-Glass*⁶—or about the insect that I was going to draw as the edition's illustrator.

Not so very long ago, *Knight Letter* carried an article⁷ about the Russian artist Maria Bubleva, who illustrated an edition featuring both *Alice* books, by a publisher in Vladivostok back in 1989. One of her illustrations (though neither reproduced nor mentioned in the article) was of Alice in a boat with a goat. True Carrollians are sure to start knitting their brows at reading this, unable to recall such a boat companion of Alice's in either of the *Alice* tales. There are other Russian artists, too, who have drawn this Looking-Glass country character. As an example, Figure 2 reproduces a drawing by Diana Lapshina. Bubleva and Lapshina illustrated the same Russian translation of *Through the Looking-Glass*, written by Vladimir Orel: it was his magic wand that made a Goat out of Carroll's Sheep. As I have not analyzed his translation, I have no explanation for this metamorphosis; all I can say is that gender is its least likely cause, as the Russian words *koza* (коза, "nanny goat") and *ovtsa* (овца, "sheep") are both feminine, and I had no problems with *ovtsa* in my own translation.



Figure 2

FAIRY-TALE ANATOMY

Let us return to the Caterpillar and its anthropomorphism. Not only does it talk and smoke like a human being, it has human *arms* which are referred to as such two times by the author. Not too many critics have noted this daring literary innovation—the fact that Carroll does not hesitate to give some of his animal characters “arms,” “hands,” and other human features; it is so revolutionary that some people are uncomfortable with it even today.

The first time the Caterpillar's arms are mentioned is when Alice peeps over the edge of the mushroom and sees the Caterpillar sitting on the top of it “with its arms folded.” They are mentioned again toward the end of Alice's conversation with Caterpillar, when it “unfolded its arms, [and] took the hookah out of its mouth again. . .” Not every translator, it appears, has had the nerve to keep the “arms” in his or her translation. Thus, Aleksandra Rozhdestvenskaya⁸ made them *perednie lapki* (передние лапки, “forelegs”) in the first instance, and dropped all mention of them the second time. Nina Demurova only referred to the “arms” (*ruki*, руки) once and dropped the second reference from her translation, too. No picture of the Caterpillar by a Russian illustrator, among those available to me, includes any element in the shape of a human arm or hand.

The Caterpillar is not the only Wonderland character with arms and hands. Though they are not specifically mentioned in the text, John Tenniel also drew hands for the Dodo. In his drawing that depicts the passing of a thimble to Alice, the Dodo's human hands come out right from under its wings, in an otherwise meticulously accurate image of the bird which could do credit to a zoology textbook. In contrast to that, Soviet artist Kalinovsky, who illustrated Boris Zakhoder's liberal retelling of *Alice*,⁴ stopped short of drawing an actual hand. His Dodo hands the thimble to the girl while holding it in his wing feathers, which are reminiscent of fingers (Figure 3).



Figure 3

By far the most famous Wonderland animal character with human hands is the White Rabbit. We learn that he wears white gloves right from the start. His gloves figure prominently in the story: he loses them, Alice picks them up, they make her grow smaller, and then the Rabbit sends Alice to his house to fetch him another pair. The logical connection between gloves and hands seems to have been overlooked by Boris Zakhoder, who turned the Rabbit's hands into "paws" (*lapki*, лапки). The reader is left to wonder how the Rabbit's gloves can fit its paws.

It may well be Lewis Carroll who should be credited for laying down a tradition later picked up and canonized by Walt Disney. Not only did Disney draw the Dodo with human hands in his 1951 animation, he made it an unwritten rule of cartoon drawing that all grotesquely anthropomorphic animal characters—such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, and others—should have arms and hands. However, so as not to make them completely human, Walt Disney added two conventions: one, they all had to wear white gloves, and, two, their hands (and, consequently, their gloves) had to have four digits—one digit less than human hands.

Interestingly, Lewis Carroll gave his illustrators a difficult problem to resolve in the case of the Caterpillar: he says that the Caterpillar was sitting with its arms folded while smoking a hookah, a posture difficult to assume, because if you smoke a hookah, at least one of your hands must be free to hold the hookah pipe close to your mouth. Dodgson himself drew the Caterpillar as smoking without the use of any limbs or any support for the hookah pipe, a rather unrealistic image. John Tenniel apparently found it impossible to depict the Caterpillar's arms folded and holding something at the same time, so in his drawing the Caterpillar simply holds the pipe with one hand.

As I have mentioned, I not only translated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but also illustrated it. I decided that it was possible to remain faithful to Carroll's description of the Caterpillar's posture only if it was depicted as having *several* pairs of arms rather than one. So I gave it three pairs of arms in my picture: **one** pair of arms is folded, a hand from another pair holds the hookah, and yet another pair is just lying on the pillow under the back of the insect's head (Figure 4). In this and some other illustrations of mine, I followed Disney in giving four-digit gloved hands to the animal characters whose arms or hands are explicitly mentioned by Lewis Carroll.

ARM OR HAND?

The subject of arms and hands is also interesting from another perspective. The Russian language is usually less specific than English when describing human limbs: It uses the same word for "arm" and "hand"



Figure 4

(*ruka*, рука) and, incidentally, for "leg" and "foot" (*noga*, нога). This is not to say that the distinction cannot be made, but, unless for a specific reason, it is not normally felt necessary in everyday conversation.

As we remember, when the White Rabbit sees Alice's arm coming out of the window, he calls his workman Pat and asks him: "What's that in the window?" And Pat answers: "Sure, it's an arm, yer honor!"

Most Russian translators of "Alice" used the generic *ruka* in their translation of Pat's answer. At least one artist misinterpreted the word as meaning "hand": It was Mikhail Karabanov, who drew a hand in his illustrations to Aleksandra Rozhdestvenskaya's translation (see Figure 5). He probably didn't give enough thought to the situation described, because if Alice hoped to catch the Rabbit by putting her arm out of a first-floor window, she should have stretched it far enough for the Rabbit and Pat to see a lot more of it than just a hand. Obviously, the artist concentrated too



Figure 5

much on the letter of the translated text he was illustrating and misread *ruka* as “hand” rather than “arm.”

One of the translators, Aleksandr Shcherbakov, seems to have misinterpreted the situation as well. He used a colloquial equivalent of “hand” (*pyaternya*, пятерня) and thus distorted the scene in his version. His illustrator, Mai Miturich, however, preferred not to depict Alice’s arm at all in his drawing of the scene.

DETAILS MATTER

Surprisingly, I have not been able to find a single Russian illustration to the poem “You are old, Father William.” However, when John Tenniel’s drawings are used in Russian editions of *Alice*, they are somewhat at odds with the text. The best-known Russian translation of the poem belongs to Samuil Marshak, a renowned children’s poet and dramatist who translated a lot of English poetry. His version of “Father William” was published in 1946 in a collection of Marshak’s selected works. He was not keen on translating prose, so he took this and a few other *Wonderland* poems out of context and translated them without much regard for the rest of the book.

As Russian verse, Marshak’s translated poems and nursery rhymes sound brilliant, so when Nina Demurova began translating Carroll in 1967, she decided to use them in her work. (She never translated poetry herself, and the poems Marshak had not translated were outsourced to other versifiers.)

Nina Demurova’s 1967 translation⁹ did not contain any illustrations to “Father William,” but its 1978 revised version was supplied with Tenniel’s drawings, which came into conflict with Marshak’s text. The discrepancy begins from the very first line (“You are old, Father William,” the young man said. . .”). There can be no doubt that Lewis Carroll meant a young *man* in his twenties, not a little boy. This is evident from Charles Dodgson’s own drawings in the manuscript of *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*. But Marshak turned the character into a *malysh* (мальш, “a little boy”), a word most often used with reference to babies, toddlers, or, more loosely, kids up to seven years of age.

The simple reason for the change was that *malysh* rhymes with *stoish’* (стоишь, “you stand”). To Marshak, sound mattered more than content in nonsense poetry—it was nonsense anyway, he apparently thought. Even the fact that small kids are highly unlikely to ask the kind of questions Father William’s son asked doesn’t seem to have bothered Marshak much. But, when Marshak’s change is included in the story and accompanied by Tenniel’s drawings, the result is a mismatch.

Under further scrutiny, Marshak’s poem reveals a lot of other inaccurate translations. Here is one small example. In the fifth stanza, the young man says, “You finished the goose with the bones and the

beak.” The eating of the bones and the beak is cited as added evidence of the old man’s strong jaws—and it is one of the things that make the poem funny. In Marshak’s version, the old man “finished two geese from the beak to the feet” («двух гусей... ты от клюва до лап уничтожил»). Two geese instead of one is no big deal (in terms of verse translation accuracy), but what follows is a much more serious distortion. If one eats a goose “from the beak to the feet,” it may mean that only the softer parts *between* the beak and the feet were eaten, which makes the scene a lot less funny. In keeping with this translation, an illustrator might draw a plate with a bird’s beak and feet left untouched on it. And such a picture would never do credit to the original.

I tried to avoid that in my own translation of *Alice in Wonderland*. My policy was to reproduce, to the extent possible, all the funny details of Father William’s exploits, because I consider those details to be essential to the very nature of such a parody in verse. On the one hand, I find them to be the foundation of Carrollian humor. On the other, reproducing vivid and funny details as often as possible (though not to the detriment of rhyme, rhythm, and reason, of course) helps bring the absurdist content of the poem into high relief, making it more expressive and memorable.

Let me give another example of the importance of detail. As we know, on hearing a fourth question, Father William threatens to kick the young man downstairs. The short phrase creates an extremely vivid scene in the reader’s mind: The old man gives his impertinent son a kick, the latter loses his balance on the top of a staircase, then, in total bewilderment, he rattles down the steps to the ground floor. It would be a shame to lose those details. Keeping them, however, is quite a challenge for the translator: if rendered in Russian, this verbal picture requires a much lengthier string of text to be fitted into a short rhythmic line, which also has to be rhymed.

Marshak did not do that: he simply shortened the old man’s threat from kicking his son downstairs to the “counting of stairs,” omitting the kick («сосчитаешь ступень за ступенью!»). Aleksandr Shcherbakov curtailed the remark as well, but did the opposite: in his version, Father William only threatens to give the young man a kick («А не выйдешь — спроважу пинком!»). Vladimir Nabokov¹⁰ stopped short of mentioning *any* possible violence: his “Uncle” simply “walks away after whispering mysteriously and sternly: you dare!” («И он пошёл своей дорогой, / Шепнув загадочно и строго: / —Ты у меня смотри!»).

In my view, omission of detail makes the text bleak and insipid, as the above examples illustrate. Being true to Carroll’s details is essential in translating his parody verse, so I tried to preserve them in my

version of the poem, albeit at the expense of spreading the old man's threat over two lines («Ступай, или быстро получишь пинок / И с лестницы вниз загрохочешь!»). Figure 6 reproduces my illustration to the last stanza of the poem, depicting both the father's kick and the son's bewildered downfall.



Figure 6

In addition to the above-stated principle of *maximal possible reproduction of vivid and funny details*, I formulated a second rule for myself while working on the *Alice* books: Lewis Carroll's nonsense verse and prose must be translated *in such a way that no faithful illustrator of the Russian translation could depict anything contradictory to the original text*. As for rhymes in poetry, the translator must lean over backwards, if necessary, to make them sound great, but not at the expense of the "picture" created in the poetic lines.

WHO STOLE THE TARTS FROM WONDERLAND?

Another poem translated by Marshak was the "indictment" of the Knave of Hearts ("The Queen of Hearts, / She made some tarts..."). His version, first published in the same book as "Father William," illustrates even more dramatically that the Russian poet was not concerned with the original sense: his priority was the sound. In rhyming words, he replaced the Queen of Hearts with "the Queen of Diamonds" (*Dama Bubyon*, Дама Бубён), and the tarts with "broth and rissoles" (*bubyon*—бульон, and *kotlety*—котлеты). He also added a character nonexistent in the original—the Ten of Diamonds (Десятка Бубён). The latter "stole the broth," while the Knave (whose suit is not mentioned) "stole the rissoles" («котлеты украл Валет»). The reason would be obvious to Russian speakers: "broth" (бульон) rhymes well with "diamonds" (бубён), and "ten rissoles" (десять котлет) rhymes with "knave" (валет).

The resulting poem was a great exercise in versification, but a far cry from an equivalent translation. It was, however, incorporated in Nina Demurova's 1967 Russian version of *Alice*. Moreover, for the sake of consistency with the poem, major changes were made in the text of the book. The King and the Queen of Hearts were transformed into the "King and the Queen of Diamonds," while the tarts were turned into rissoles.

In her 1970 article "*Golos i Skripka*" ("The Voice and the Violin"), Nina Demurova explained her choice as follows: "By calling the Queen of Hearts the Queen of Diamonds, I linked her to English folklore—more precisely, to the part of it that sits firmly in our minds. In this way, the principle of recognition came into play in the Russian version, one which is so important to enjoy Carroll. It goes without saying that tarts were changed too: as can easily be imagined, they turned into rissoles."¹¹

We must be thankful to the translator for not adding a new storyline to the *Alice* book, with the broth and the Ten of Diamonds, but the changes made were, I am afraid, unjustified. It is hardly possible to aim at any "recognition of English folklore" or "enjoyment of Carroll" with Marshak's poem misrepresenting both the former and the latter so grossly. For Marshak, the original poems he translated were little more than raw material for his own creativity. Specific details meant almost nothing to him; he easily worked them over for the sake of nice rhyming or wording. His predominant principle in translating poetry can be summed up approximately as "Take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself"—the reverse of Lewis Carroll's famous maxim.

As a result, illustrators who are guided by Marshak's translations (or texts that are based on them) may depict something far removed from Lewis Carroll's story. And vice versa: pictures that are true to the original would not be good for a translation based on the sound-before-sense principle. Examples of this are two illustrations by the artist Petar Chuklev for the 1967 Russian translation of *Alice* printed in Sofia, Bul-



Figure 7

garia.⁹ In accordance with the translation, the Queen and the Knave carry the sign of diamonds instead of hearts (see Figures 7 and 8). These two pictures would obviously never do for the original English text, unless the card suit was redrawn (although these characters hardly remind me of playing cards).

TRANSLATORS' CAFÉ MENU: PRETZELS, CUPCAKES, PIROZHKI

The editors at Nauka, the publisher of the revised 1978 version,³ were apparently not totally supportive of the principles proclaimed in the above-cited 1970 article. The translator must have reconsidered them, at least in part, because Marshak's broth-and-rissoles poem was dropped from that and all subsequent editions of Demurova's translation, and Olga Sedakova was commissioned to write a new Russian version of the Queen of Hearts rhyme. Unfortunately, her treatment of the original was also excessively liberal. Although the Queen and the Knave were given back their original suit of hearts, the new version of the stolen dessert bore no more resemblance to the original tarts than did Marshak's rissoles—they emerged this time in the avatar of pretzels (*krendeli*, крендели). Clearly, the word was chosen as a handy rhyme for "Hearts" (*chervei*, червей—*krendelei*, кренделей). Once again, the sound received priority over the sense. The change was transferred to the text, and Chapter XI got entitled «Кто украл крендели?» ("Who Stole the Pretzels?"). The editors of the book, which featured John Tenniel's illustrations, must have overlooked the fact that "pretzels" contradicted Tenniel's familiar drawing of tarts on the frontispiece.

When my own translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was in the pipeline in 2015, a young Russian artist was commissioned to create the illustrations. Among other things, she was to draw large pictorial initial capitals for each chapter. When she started sending draft drawings in, I found that, for the letter H, she had chosen to depict two soldier cards holding a dish between them. On that dish, the notorious pretzels surfaced again! The artist had relied on

the book she herself had read and admitted that she had not even suspected that translations could differ from the original (or among themselves), not only in wording, but also in the inventory of actual things and characters involved in the story. (She redrew the dish, removing the pretzels and restoring the tarts, but owing to an unfortunate accident, was unable to continue her work. Because of tight deadlines, the job was given to the author of this article, who happens to have received some extensive art training in his younger years.)

If we turn to other Russian translations of *Alice*, we will find that the dish stolen by the Knave varies there, too. Four Russian translations and adaptations (including those by writers Vladimir Nabokov and Boris Zakhoder) contain *pirozhki* (пирожки), or closed stuffed pies (not to be confused with *pirogi*, another form of the same word, which has come to mean "dumplings" in English). For the sake of clarity, a picture of a dish of *pirozhki* is given here in Figure 9. This choice could be attributed to the fact that the two writers heavily Russified their versions of *Alice* (Nabokov also changing her name to *Anya*) to give the book an atmosphere more familiar to Russian children. And what could be more familiar to them than *pirozhki*, the writers probably thought. Alas! this is no longer so: in the past few decades, the Russian people's love for *pirozhki* has diminished noticeably.

Translator Aleksandr Olenich-Gnenenko¹² chose cupcakes (*kekсы*, кексы). The reason for that decision is not clear, but this Soviet translator lived behind the Iron Curtain (the first edition of his work was brought out in 1946, the second in 1960), and it is quite possible that he simply did not know what tarts look or taste like. Or perhaps he could not find a one-word equivalent; In Russian, a tart with a sweet stuffing is referred to as *pirozhnoe korzinochka* (пирожное «корзиночка»—literally, "basket-shaped cake"), which he might have considered too lengthy a name—if he did consider it at all, that is. The first word in this combination, *pirozhnoe*, covers a broader range of desserts than "tart," but is still a correct reference to them in Russian. The



Figure 8



Figure 9

only translator who used the word *пирожное*, other than myself, was Aleksandr Shcherbakov.

A HOUSE OF CARDS

Let us return to the pack of cards of Wonderland. The famous passage describing the procession in which Alice first saw the Queen and King of Hearts mentions three suits: clubs, diamonds, and hearts. Lewis Carroll played on the literal meanings of card suit names: they are actually the names of objects carried by, or decorations worn by, cards of the respective suits. One problem here is that the words translate differently into Russian in their literal and figurative meanings. For example, “clubs” is *trefy* (трефы) or *kresti* (крести) as a card suit, but *dubinki* (дубинки) as a weapon. On the other hand, the Russian names of card suits have their own, and very different, second meanings. For example, the Russian for “hearts” is *chervi* (черви), a word homonymous with “worms” and not with the bodily organ, although the visual association is still there, of course.

Here is how Nina Demurova criticized the translation of the names of suits by the author of an earlier Russian translation:

How much has been lost in Olenich-Gnenenko’s version! The whole set of second meanings is gone, the connection between the hearts (*chervi*) and the human heart (*serdtse*) is obscure. . . In the original, Carroll plays upon card suits. Soldiers carry clubs (two notions combined here), courtiers are adorned with diamonds, while the royal children bear hearts as the sign of the monarchical dynasty. It was only possible to produce the same effect in Russian translation by using the same technique, the homonymy of card suits, to the maximum. I have tried to translate the scene in such a way as to recreate the double entendre of Carroll’s text. The scene of the royal procession had to be combined with card play.¹³

As a result, the scene was seriously modified in translation. Instead of clubs, the soldiers were described as carrying lances (the literal meaning of *piki* — пики, spades), the courtiers’ diamonds were replaced by crosses (the second sense of *kresti* — крести, clubs), and signs of the heart on royal children’s clothes were said to be «вышиты червонным золотом» “embroidered with pure gold” (a play on *chervi*—черви

“hearts,” and *chervonnoye zoloto*—червонное золото “high-standard gold with an admixture of brass”). “Of course, much was altered there compared to the original,” Nina Demurova wrote, “but instead a technique was preserved to produce a play on words and a jocular allusion.”¹⁴

Regretfully, the technique described is highly vulnerable to criticism and may have involved more losses than gains. We can leave aside the less important points like the fact that high-standard gold is never used for embroidery.¹⁵ More importantly, the translator seems to have overlooked one more layer of Carroll’s language fabric; Carroll did not simply play upon words: he built a subtle and thoroughly thought-out *functional* system.

In the magic kingdom ruled by the King and the Queen of Hearts, every suit and category of cards has its logically assigned role. The junior hearts are, of course, royal children. The junior clubs are soldiers armed with clubs. The junior diamond cards are courtiers “ornamented all over with diamonds.” The senior cards of all suits (except the hearts) are guests. In the description of the procession, only the junior spades are not mentioned—readers are given the chance to guess by themselves that the spades can be none other than gardeners, because gardeners dig earth with spades. In other words, there is a strict and deeply rational hierarchy in Carroll’s Wonderland, where categories of cards are assigned the functions that are associated with the objects whose names are consonant with the card suit name.

Below is a table presenting more graphically Carroll’s three-tier symbolic structure of the court of Hearts.

Deplorably, none of the seven Russian versions of *Wonderland* that I have analyzed reproduces the system in its entirety, complete with the third tier (which, I am afraid, may not have been noticed or understood by the translators). It was modified—with soldiers made “spades” and gardeners something else—by Olga Timiriaseff, the assumed author of the anonymous 1879 translation.¹⁶ Translators Vladimir Nabokov, Nina Demurova, and Boris Zakhoder also took the same approach. (Aleksandra Rozhdestvenskaya, Olenich-Gnenenko, and Aleksandr Shcherbakov refrained from rendering the wordplay altogether.) These reshuffles, apart from shattering Lewis Carroll’s elegant construction, have confused illustrators as well. The artist Kalinovsky depicted the soldiers as cards of three suits: spades, clubs, and

<i>Card suit</i>	Hearts	Diamonds	Clubs	Spades
<i>Attribute</i>	heart shapes on clothes (as <i>dynastic emblem</i>)	diamonds (as <i>precious jewelry</i>)	clubs (as <i>weapons</i>)	spades (as <i>garden tools</i>)
<i>Function</i>	Royalty	Courtiers	Soldiers	Gardeners



Figure 10



Figure 11

hearts, all carrying lances (Figure 10), and the artist Miturich mixed two functional symbols together by drawing soldiers with spade-shaped heads and with clubs (Figure 11).

It is, of course, a hard task to preserve both the visual symbols and the functional structure implied by Carroll. In my version, I resolved the issue by increasing the number of attributes so as to play on Russian words without losing the specifics of the original. Thus, soldiers are described as carrying clubs (their original attribute) with trefoil tips (the card suit symbol shape), and the courtiers are described as dressed in diamond-studded clothes while marching to the sound of tambourines (the Russian for “tambourines,” *bubny* [бубны], also means “diamonds” as a card suit):

Первыми, держа дубинки с наконечниками в форме трилистника, вышагивали десять стражников. . . За ними под звон бубнов следовали десять придворных: их мундиры были расшиты бриллиантами. . .

(*In back translation:* “First came ten soldiers carrying clubs with trefoil tips; . . . next the ten courtiers, to the sound of tambourines; these were ornamented all over with diamonds. . . .”)

This method enabled me to create wordplay afforded by the Russian lexicon without destroying the original conceptual fabric of the fairy tale. Naturally, any



Figure 12

illustration carried out in accordance with this version will not contradict the English original, either. Reproduced here in Figure 12 is my drawing of the Knave of Hearts accompanied by two soldier cards.

CHESHIRE CATS PURSE THEIR LIPS

Let us now devote some time to the Cheshire Cat. Artists from English-speaking countries usually draw it showing a mouthful of teeth, often scary and even monstrous, as in Tim Burton’s 2010 movie. By contrast, most Russian illustrators make it look sweet and gentle, as can be exemplified with drawings by Kalinovsky (Figure 13) and Karabanov (Figure 14). The cats in these illustrations smile with their lips closed or only slightly opened.

The reason that Cheshire cats look different in drawings by Russian and other foreign artists has again to do with—not unexpectedly—the semantics and nuances of translation. As we know, the Cheshire cat’s distinctive feature is its grin. This is a tricky word to translate into Russian. One translator, Vladimir Nabokov, used *ukhmylyat’sya* (ухмыляться) for “grin,” from a verb that actually means “to smile smugly, to smirk.” This is a surprisingly inaccurate choice, given Nabokov’s good mastery of English. It may, perhaps, be writ-



Figure 13

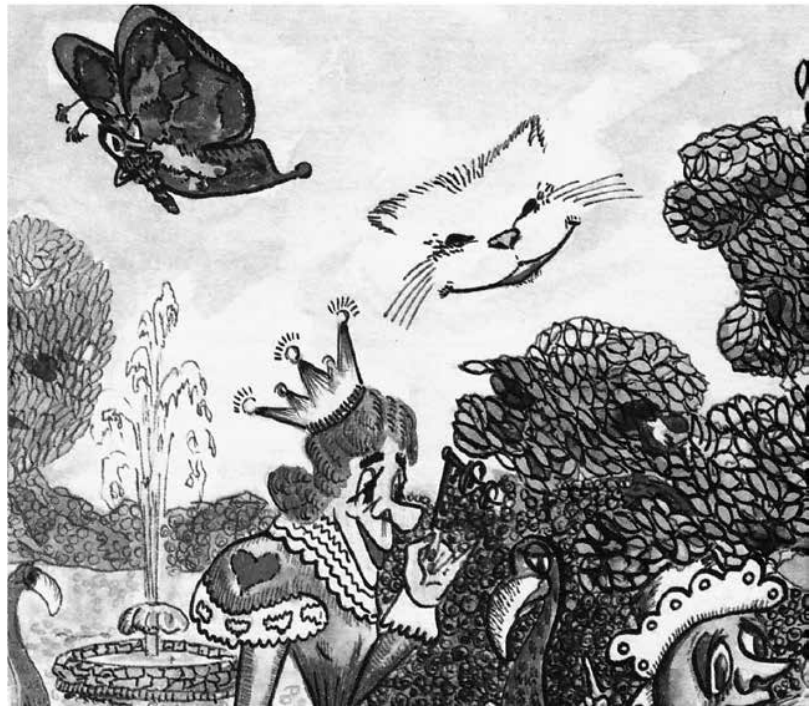


Figure 14

ten off to his young age: he was only about 23 when he translated, or rather retold, *Alice's Adventures* as *Anya in Wonderland*. The other six translators whose versions I've analyzed used *ulybat'sya* (улыбаться, "smile").

"Smile" is a very generic word and, of course, it is not the precise equivalent of "grin." The latter implies showing one's teeth, and this is very important: Carroll points out twice that the Cat's mouth "had a great many teeth," which made Alice feel "it ought to be treated with respect." Although the Russian language has a verb which means "to smile AND show one's teeth," *osklabit'sya* (осклабиться), it is rather dated and would not sound natural in a text intended for modern children, let alone in a remark uttered by a little girl. But to write that the Cheshire Cat simply "smiled" is to lead the reader and the illustrator astray.

As a way out of this dilemma, I have used what is called descriptive translation. In Chapter 6, where we first meet the Cheshire cat, "which was lying on the hearth and grinning from ear to ear," I wrote, in my translation:

« . . . который сидел у камина и улыбался до ушей, скаля зубы».

This means, literally, "which was lying on the hearth and smiled from ear to ear, showing its teeth." I believe that only an explicit wording like this can convey Lewis Carroll's concept of the character correctly and let the illustrator see it through the author's eyes.

COOKED IN TRANSLATION

There is, however, a character in Wonderland who gives Russian translators a bigger headache than the Cheshire Cat: the Mock Turtle. One problem is that mock turtle soup has never been a familiar dish in the Russian cuisine. Second, the precise equivalent of "turtle"—*morskaya cherepakha* (морская черепаха)—is too long for a character's name, and if the adjective is dropped, it will mean "tortoise," not "turtle." Lastly, there's a whole set of syntactical nuances that prevent the Russian language from extracting "mock turtle" out of "mock turtle soup" as easily as it is done in English. This is probably why some translators came up with very outlandish versions of the character.

Vladimir Nabokov suggested *Chepupakha*, a portmanteau of two like-sounding words: *cherepakha* (черепаха, "turtle" or "tortoise") and *chepukha* (чепуха, "nonsense"). This is a rather ingenious and funny version, but its cardinal drawback is that it has nothing to do with mock turtle soup and, worse, cannot be reasonably related to any Mock Turtle drawing.

For her 1967 translation, Nina Demurova invented *Pod-Kotik* (Под-Котик, "imitation seal fur"). This is how she explained it: "*Pod-Kotik* meets the four conditions that I believe are very important. It is a masculine noun. It is easily and naturally associated with the sea. . . *Pod-Kotik* is, of course, a fake. Lastly and most importantly, this name is based on realia that are well known to us [Russians]. Who hasn't worn imitation sealskin hats and collars; who hasn't seen numerous imitation seal fur coats?"¹⁷

Today, almost half a century after those lines were written, the last statement in this passage is long outdated. Imitation sealskin is a fashion of a distant past. You will hardly find a person younger than sixty in today's Russia who will understand what *pod-kotik* means at all. But even if this were not the case, I am afraid that this version of the character's name does not meet the principal condition of a translation, as opposed to a loose adaptation or retelling: It is not the character that Lewis Carroll invented. The *how-beats-what* approach should not, in my view, be seen as the prevailing principle of translation. It does often work to render an occasional isolated joke or pun, but it does not work if a pun gives rise to an active, lively character with numerous memorable features, one that can BE DRAWN.

In the 1978 revised edition, *Pod-Kotik* was replaced by *Cherepakha Kvazi* (Черепаха Квази, "Turtle Quasi"). Here is the description given to it by the Queen of Hearts in the Russian version: "It is what quasi-turtle soup is made of" («Это то, из чего делают квази-черепаший суп»). The wording is vulnerable to criticism because there is no such term as "quasi-turtle soup" in Russian. In addition, the prefix *quasi-* is too bookish for a children's tale. But at least the character so named can fit in with John Tenniel's drawings.

The Mock Turtle was a stumbling block for other translators as well. Boris Zakhoder came up with *Morskoi Delikates* (Морской Деликатес, "Seafood Delicacy"). There is no trace of a pun or any wordplay

in this name. What such an animal might look like is anybody's guess. Perhaps the artist Kalinovsky saw this as a good opportunity to give way to his imagination, but the way he depicted the Mock Turtle (see Figure 15) can in no way be related to the original Carrollian character. I see this image as a typical Soviet-era drawing: The character's head reminds one of a pikeperch, and it has the legs of a crab; both pikeperch and crabmeat were longed-for delicacies of the Brezhnev period, a time when a lot of high-quality food items were in scarce supply and hard to get.

When thinking over the way to deal with the Mock Turtle in translation, I adopted the back-to-basics approach. After all, Olenich-Gnenenko's version, *Falshivaya Cherepakha* (Фальшивая Черепаха), or "false tortoise," which Nina Demurova once criticized bitterly, was not that bad. There are other similarly called dishes in Russian cuisine: *falshivy zayats* (фальшивый заяц, "mock hare"), *falshivy porosyonok* (фальшивый поросёнок, "mock suckling pig"), *falshivye byagushechy lapki* (фальшивые лягушечьи лапки, "mock frog legs"), and so forth. In fact, its only shortcoming is the feminine gender of both of the name's **parts** (adjective and noun). To cope with that and make the Mock Turtle a "man," I decided to call it *Yakoby-Cherepakha* (Якобы-Черепаха, literally "Said-to-Be Turtle") in my own translation, thus replacing the feminine adjective with a genderless particle—*yakoby* (якобы, "allegedly, said to be"). The word helped me kill two birds with one stone:



Figure 15

it made the name acceptable for a male character, and it fit naturally into the Queen's explanation of its name:

— Ну как же: из него варят суп — якобы черепаховый.

(In back translation: “Why, they make soup from him—said to be turtle soup.”)

CONCLUDING REMARK

Lewis Carroll's fairy tales have innumerable planes and shades of meaning, which is one of the reasons why Carrollian studies cannot exhaust the subject sufficiently and will never stop. As we discover new gems of wit and wisdom in what he has written, his every word, name, and phrase become ever more precious. Earlier Russian translations of Carroll were often based on an excessively superficial and frivolous approach to his works: Translators believed they were free to modify, adjust, and reshape Carroll's stories to suit whatever tastes and styles they thought appropriate. However, some, if not most, failed to see the sophisticated design of Carroll's books, his elaborate ideas and concepts, and the intricate connections among them. In their turn, liberal and approximate translations often confused and misled illustrators, who did not even realize that their pictures contradicted what Carroll had actually written. I am strongly convinced that, in modern times, it should be every translator's motto to make sure that the visual details of their translations do not lead readers or artists astray. In illustrating the translators' work, they need to illustrate Carroll.

¹ Кэрролл, Льюис. Приключения Алисы в Стране Чудес / Перевод с англ., предисл., комм. и илл. Д. И. Ермоловича. — М.: Аудитория, 2016. (AAIW, trans. Yermolovich).

² Кэрролл, Льюис. Приключения Алисы в Стране Чудес. Зазеркалье (про то, что увидела там Алиса) / Пер. А. Щербак. — М.: Худ. лит., 1977. (AAIW and TTLG, trans. Shcherbakov).

³ Кэрролл, Льюис. Приключения Алисы в Стране Чудес. Сквозь зеркало и что там увидела Алиса, или Алиса в

Зазеркалье / Пер. Н. М. Демуровой. — М.: Наука, 1978, p. 323. (AAIW and TTLG, trans. Demurova).

⁴ Кэрролл, Льюис. Приключения Алисы в Стране Чудес / Пересказ с англ. Б. Заходера. — М.: Дет. лит., 1979. (AAIW, trans. Zakhoder).

⁵ Carroll, Lewis. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Through the Looking-Glass* / Edited by Martin Gardner; expanded and updated by Mark Burstein. NY, L.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015, p. 333.

⁶ To be published in 2017 by Auditoria, Moscow.

⁷ Burstein, Mark, with Yermolovich, Dmitry. “Arcane Illustrators: Maria Bubleva.” *Knight Letter*: Spring 2015. Vol. II, issue 214, No. 94. pp. 7–9.

⁸ Кэрролл, Льюис. Приключения Алисы в Стране Чудес / Пер. А. Рождественской [имя переводчика не указано]. — СПб.: Тов-во М. О. Вольф, 1911. (AAIW, uncredited, trans. A. Rozhdestvenskaya).

⁹ Кэрролл, Льюис. Алиса в стране чудес. Сквозь Зеркало и что там увидела Алиса / Пер. Н. Демуровой, стихи в переводах С. Маршака и Д. Орловской. — София: Изд-во лит-ры на иностранных языках, 1967. (AAIW and TTLG, trans. Demurova, Poetry in translation by S. Marshak and D. Orlovskaya. — Sofia: Publishing House of Literature In Foreign Languages, 1967).

¹⁰ Карроль, Л. Аня в Стране Чудес / Пер. с англ. В. Сирина [псевдоним В. В. Набокова]. — Берлин: Гамаюн, 1923. (*Anya in Wonderland*, trans. V. Nabokov).

¹¹ Демурова Н. Д. Голос и скрипка // Мастерство перевода: сб. 7-й. — М.: Сов. писатель, 1970, p. 168. (“The Voice and the Violin,” article by Demurova). *This and other excerpts from the articles cited have been translated from the Russian by the author of this paper.*

¹² Кэрролл, Льюис. Алиса в Стране Чудес / Пер. А. Оленича-Гнененко. — Ростов: Ростовское книжное изд-во, 1960. (AAIW, trans. Olenich-Gnenenko).

¹³ See source in endnote 11, p. 167.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁵ “The metal wires used to make the threads have never been entirely gold; they have always been gold-coated silver (silver-gilt) or cheaper metals, and even then the ‘gold’ often contains a very low percent of real gold.” — *Wikipedia*, Goldwork (embroidery).

¹⁶ Соня в Царстве дива. — М.: Тип. А. И. Мамонтова, 1879 // *Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder*: a facsimile of the first Russian Translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, Ed. by Mark Burstein.—The Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 2013.

¹⁷ See source in endnote 11, p. 170.

S. Gross, *I Am Blind and My Dog Is Dead*
(Dodd, Mead, 1977)

